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SUBJECT: UPDATE ON LESOTHO'S FOREIGN MINISTER

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CLASSIFIED BY: JUNE CARTER PERRY, AMBASSADOR, EXEC, STATE.
REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

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REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

¶1. (C) Information on the January 29 shooting of Foreign Minister of Lesotho, Monyane Moleleki, continues to develop. Drawing on our discussions with the Commander of the Lesotho Defense Force, the Minister of Finance and private individuals, the following information has been provided by government sources:

(a) The FOMIN was discharged January 31 (PM). (Note: we confirmed his arrival home late Tuesday and noted his 2/1/06 appearance at the opening of The High Court),
(b) the injuries were determined by the military hospital to be superficial in nature and were removed from the right arm,
(c) the weapons used projectiles that "fragmented" upon impact; type used by protective services,
(d) the attack was well planned,
(e) the FOMIN was driving his personal 4-wheel SUV,
(f) senior patrol guards who were to have patrolled the house did not do so.

¶2. (C) The Defense Force Commander told us he has launched an internal Army investigation as he believes the assailants may be "renegade" or "insubordinate" members (or former members) of the LDF. At the same time, he stated that the police investigation will go forward. According to Finance Minister Thahane, the government decided not to go forward with a statement by the Deputy Prime Minister, but would await investigations' outcome.

¶3. (C) The Minister of Finance stated on February 1 that the situation did not necessarily mean political motivations were the cause; it "could be personal," he argued; the "political motivation," has not been established. On the other hand, the FOMIN's sister-in-law; a prominent physician, (PROTECT: Dr. Mphu Ramatlapeng) found the attack "disturbing." She elaborated on the country's welcome lack of violence, such as political shootings, since the 1998 disturbances. She believed her brother-in-law's wounds were not deeply serious, but observed that her sister (Moleleki's wife) was now "nervous" in their hillside home. Note: The government has increased security at the homes of both the Foreign Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister.

¶4. (SBU) The Minister's family and a Cabinet colleague thanked Ambassador for Embassy's flowers and note as well as the gracious letter from the Assistant Secretary.

Comment

15. (C) There are many unanswered questions surrounding this attack. The GOL does not seem to want to "point fingers" at discontented elements within the ruling LCD party. Yet, in our January 30 and 31 conversations with the DPM and the Minister of Finance, they both reflected on "party divisions as the possible root cause." Our RSA counterpart has been in contact with his Foreign Minister and has described his country as "disturbed" by this incident. The Republic of South Africa (RSA) High Commissioner believes there is a political cause behind the attack coming as it did near the end of the divided party congress. Moleleki is a perceived threat to the PM's popularity and is also a hurdle for Communications Minister Thabane should he wish to seek party leadership in the future. The political situation seems calm in light of Sunday's incident, but the fissures that may have led to this situation are likely still in place, despite the LCD's unity message. We are reinforcing the message of democratic processes with all stakeholders. End Comment.

PERRY